

NSC BRIEFING

29 August 1956

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BACKGROUND--SUEZ: ANNEX A - CANAL PILOT DATA

- I. Prior to the crisis, the European canal company considered that 243 pilots was the minimum required to handle the current level of canal traffic.
- A. At the beginning of 1956 there were 187 canal pilots on duty, including 56 French, 52 British and 32 Egyptians.
- B. At the time of nationalization, it is estimated that 205 pilots were on duty. Thus, a shortage existed even prior to the crisis

DOCUMENT NO. 19
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
☒ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE 1-14-80 REVIEWER: 372044

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- C. Since nationalization, at least 23 additional Egyptian pilots have been hired. However, failure of some European pilots to return to Egypt from leave has contributed to the present shortage.
- II. Of approximately 155 non-Egyptian canal pilots, 143 have reaffirmed loyalty to the European-owned canal company and expressed a desire for repatriation.
 - A. The company is reported to have instructed all its 1,387 non-Egyptian employees to leave Egypt if the forthcoming Cairo discussions failed to settle the Suez dispute within an agreed time limit--reportedly by 15 September.

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- III. Egypt has reduced Suez convoys from 2 a day in each direction to one a day in each direction.
- A. This change had actually been considered by the European Company in June in order to reduce pressure on the overworked pilots.
 - B. The schedule change has reduced the backlog of vessels awaiting passage and the number of vessels transiting the canal is being maintained at the normal rate of approximately 40-45 ships perday.

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